

Message Text

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ACTION SCA-01

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 VOE-00 SY-05 PER-03 MMS-04 ABF-01

SSO-00 /025 W

----- 110101

O 201930Z MAY 75 ZFF-4

FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7834

UNCLAS MEXICO 4356

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CVIS, AFSP, MX

SUBJECT: STRENGTHENING MEXICO CITY'S CONSULAR PROGRAM

REF: MEXICO'S 3977 AND MEXICO'S 4289

FOR SCA ADMINISTRATOR WALENTYNOWICZ FROM AMB. JOVA

1. IN THESE EARLY SPRING DAYS THE DEMAND FOR NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS HAS ALREADY ESCALATED TO THE LEVELS REACHED AT THE PEAK PERIOD LAST SUMMER. THE SITUATION THREATENS TO GET OUT OF HAND UNLESS THE DEPARTMENT AND THE EMBASSY CAN JOINTLY FIND WAYS TO COPE WITH THE PROBLEM.
2. VISA APPLICANTS ARE APPEARING IN SUCH NUMBERS THAT THEY ARE LINING UP AT NOON ONE DAY AND SLEEPING ON SIDEWALK OVERNIGHT, TO BE CERTAIN THAT THEY WILL BE ADMITTED FOR CONSIDERATION THE NEXT DAY. BY SIX O'CLOCK EACH MORNING THE LINE STRETCHES AROUND THE EMBASSY AND OFTEN ZIG-ZAGS IN BLOCK LONG LINES ALONG CALLE RIBBLE. THIS SITUATION HAS PROMPTED YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS TO STAND IN LINE AND THEN SELL THEIR PLACE FOR AS MUCH AS TWENTY DOLLARS. WITH THE HELP OF LOCAL POLICE WE HAVE HOPEFULLY PUT A STOP TO THIS PRACTICE, AS WE HAVE TO THE PRACTICE OF OTHER ENTREPRENEURS CLAIMING TO BE EMBASSY EMPLOYEES AND OFFERING TO EXPEDITE VISAS FOR SUMS RANGING AS HIGH AS FIFTEEN TO TWENTY DOLLARS.
3. AS I REPORTED IN REFTEL 3977, I HAVE ARRANGED FOR TWO OR

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THREE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL OFFICERS TO SPEND UP TO TWO HOURS

A DAY AT THE VISA ISSUING COUNTER. ADDITIONALLY, I HAVE ASSIGNED TWO OFFICERS FROM OTHER SECTIONS EACH AFTERNOON TO SIGN VISAS SO THAT THE EXPERIENCED VISA OFFICERS CAN DEVOTE THEIR TIME TO INTERVIEWING APPLICANTS. CONSULAR OFFICERS WHO NORMALLY PERFORM CITIZENSHIP, WELFARE AND PROTECTION, AND NOTARIAL DUTIES ARE BEING ASSIGNED FOR BRIEF PERIODS EACH DAY TO THE VISA OFFICE. WE HAVE EXPANDED THE SEATING CAPACITY FROM 450 TO 600 AND WE SHALL SHORTLY ADD BENCHES WHICH WILL GIVE US A SEATING CAPACITY OF 1,000.

4. WHILE THESE MEASURES HAVE HELPED, I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THE WISDOM OF DIVERTING ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL RESOURCES TO CONSULAR ENDEAVORS FOR ANY PROLONGED PERIOD. THIS GENERAL PROBLEM HAS EXISTED FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS AND SEEMS TO GROW STEADILY MORE ACUTE. THE BASIC PROBLEM IS CLEARLY ONE OF INSUFFICIENT CONSULAR OFFICERS AND SUPPORTING STAFF. WHILE I HAVE TEMPORARILY FILLED THE VOID TO A MINIMUM DEGREE, I AM HOPEFUL THAT THE DEPARTMENT CAN FIND THE MEANS TO PROVIDE US WITH URGENTLY NEEDED ASSISTANCE. I PARTICULARLY ASK THAT THE DEPARTMENT:

(A) AUTHORIZE THE USE OF PLATES TO PERMIT SIGNING VISAS MECHANICALLY RATHER THAN BY HAND, AND TO INSERT "THE BEARER" IN LIEU OF WRITING IN THE NAME OF THE APPLICANT;

(B) DIRECT-TRANSFER A QUALIFIED FSO-4 OFFICER TO ASSUME CHARGE OF OUR ALL-IMPORTANT NON-IMMIGRANT VISA UNIT, A POSITION VACANT SINCE APRIL 30;

(C) ASSIGN TWO OR THREE EXPERIENCED CONSULAR OFFICERS ON TDY, HOPEFULLY DRAWING ON PERSONNEL RELEASED FOR REASSIGNMENT BY THE TURN OF EVENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA;

(D) ADVISE ME WHETHER IT WOULD BE REALISTIC TO COMMISSION SEVERAL OF OUR MORE SENIOR SECRETARIES WHO, THOUGH UNTRAINED IN VISA MATTERS ARE BROADLY KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT FOREIGN AFFAIRS ENDEAVORS AND WHO HAVE ADEQUATE LANGUAGE SKILL AND THE NECESSARY SENSITIVITIES TO LEND SUPPORT IN PROCESSING THE LESS DIFFICULT VISA CASES;

(E) EXPEDITE THE GRANTING OF AUTHORITY TO HIRE SUMMERTIME UNCLASSIFIED

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HELP AS REQUESTED IN EMBASSY'S 4289.

5. THE VARIOUS INTERIM STEPS OUTLINED WITH HOPEFULLY ENABLE US TEMPORARILY TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM. MEANWHILE, I SHALL BE MOST GRATEFUL IF THE DEPARTMENT WILL DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO EXPAND AND TO STABILIZE THE CONSULAR STAFF. HERE AGAIN, PERHAPS SOUTHEAST ASIA MIGHT PROVIDE PERSONNEL RESOURCES.

6. I RECOGNIZE THAT OUR VISA APPLICANTS UNDOUBTEDLY INCLUDE A PERCENTAGE OF POTENTIAL ILLEGAL WORKERS. NEVERTHELESS, UNLIKE SOME POSTS IN THE CARIBBEAN WHICH ALSO FACE A CRUSH OF APPLICANTS, THE GREAT MAJORITY HERE ARE BONA FIDE WHOSE PURPOSE IS TO VISIT THE U.S. FOR VACATIONS AND SHOPPING AND WHO THUS CAN CONTRIBUTE SUBSTANTIALLY TO THE HEALTH OF OUR ECONOMY AND BALANCE OF PAYMENTS.

JOVA

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 MAY 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975MEXICO04356
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750177-0123
From: MEXICO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750536/aaaabgdd.tel
Line Count: 123
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SCA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 MEXICO'S 3977, 75 AND MEXICO'S 4289
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 FEB 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: WITHDRAWN <10 Jun 2003 by MorefiRH, INA>; RELEASED <23 FEB 2004 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <26 FEB 2004 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: STRENGTHENING MEXICO CITY'S CONSULAR PROGRAM
TAGS: CVIS, AFSP, MX
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006